



A Study of Numbers by mildred meadowlark

Category: Stranger Things, 2016

Genre: Sci-Fi, Suspense

Language: English

Characters: Dustin H., Eleven/Jane H., Lucas S., Mike W.

Status: In-Progress

Published: 2017-11-18 20:33:51

Updated: 2017-11-18 20:33:51

Packaged: 2019-12-17 04:55:27

Rating: K+

Chapters: 1

Words: 2,049

Publisher: www.fanfiction.net

Summary: When she escaped, she knew she would have to run. She knew to expect dangers and fear, and that Papa would never stop looking for her. She didn't expect that the world would astonish her, that she would know the taste of kindness and the warmth of friendship, or that she would surpass everything she ever knew about herself. Eleven POV. Mostly canon. Follows S1 & S2.

A Study of Numbers

This is my first Stranger Things fic. Hope you enjoy.

-Millie

Disclaimer: Stranger Things ain't mine. I'm not cool enough for that.

1

Flight

Run.

Heart pounding, thump-thump-thump, loud and frantic. She ran. Fear, cradled like a ball at the base of her skull, and chasing, ice-cold, through her veins... she could feel it.

She was always cold. Always.

But never like this. Never this trembling cold that she could feel in the very marrow of her bones. And she shook with it.

But still, she ran.

Otherwise... they would find her.

No.

It was a small voice, deep inside herself. She'd heard it before. When Papa-

No. Keep running.

And so she did. With the sound of her own footfall in her ears, eventually even the echoing cry of the alarms had begun to fade, and still she continued to run, until finally, finally, all she could hear was the sound of her own heartbeat and the infinite quiet of the trees surrounding her.

Hunger

She'd been hiding in the woods, still terrified, and still running.

The first time she'd tasted the air, *real* air, cold and bitter and clear, was in those dizzying moments after she'd crawled through the endless dark of the pipe, away from the bad place.

And then she'd run. She hadn't stopped because she knew, she knew that Papa would never stop looking for her.

She'd been afraid, at first. All around her was dark, just as it had been in the pipe – the woods, the ground, the sky...

She knew what it meant, when the sky went dark like that. Night. Papa had told her.

But she'd never seen it for herself. And she'd been frightened of it.

It reminded her of that place in her head, that place where everything was dark... where she'd seen that... *bad* thing.

The second time, she'd seen the tiny lights that hung there in the dark – *stars*, she told herself – and she knew then that *this* dark was not like the dark place in her head, not at all; that this was... a... a hopeful kind of dark. She'd stopped running so she could simply stare at the countless stars, glimmering and winking, high, high above her head.

After that night, when the sky had lightened, she had been braver.

And so, when she had caught the scent of something – *food* – she'd moved, cautiously, towards the source. She hadn't been able to stop herself.

Her stomach ached – an awful, gurgling sort of pain – and she'd known it was hunger.

She'd stayed hidden in the trees, tensed and ready to run again at a moment's notice. She'd almost run, heart pounding once more, when

she'd heard a door slam, and realised she'd drifted too close.

But finally, hunger won out, and she'd made her move.

Creeping in through the back door – she'd seen the man, the big one, come out through it a few times – she moved quietly, eyes wide and alert. She could hear voices coming in from the front of the building.

Her legs felt jerky and stiff, but by now the smell of the food was all around her, and she could *see* the food just sitting there, and there was no one watching...

Still, she gave a quick glance around, noting the two men, just over there – and him, the man she'd seen before, walking over to them. And then she reached out grabbed it, moving into plain sight of the men, and pushed a handful of it into her mouth.

It wasn't hot, but that didn't matter. It tasted good.

More.

She was so hungry.

More.

And then-

"Hey!"

Her eyes flew up, and saw the men looking at her. She froze for a moment, just a moment-

Run.

3

Others

Gone. Gone, gone, gonegonegonegone...

She hadn't meant to.

He had been nice to her, the man. Benny. And now he was gone.

And *they* had come.

Her head ached, and she was cold again. Her head always ached after she *made things happen*. After she'd hurt them. The bad men.

And that woman.

She'd been frightened of that woman.

And then she'd run.

Again.

Now, now it was cold, and it was dark, and wet. It made the woods around her seem wilder, and there was a dark feeling in the air, one that she thought she knew...

The yellow t-shirt the man – Benny – had given her was wet through and she shivered.

Gone.

She could hear movement – *others* – and she tensed, watching, narrow-eyed. They were like her. Young.

She could tell, hear it in their voices. They didn't sound like the men from the bad place at all. And she could almost see them too.

And then, their voices were suddenly very loud and she knew they were coming her way, and she fled through the trees.

Not far though. They'd stopped, and their voices were still loud, and she wanted to know what they looked like.

She couldn't have said why.

So, she moved slightly closer.

Then...

There were three of them. They were all as wet as she was, and two of them were... was it angry?

They held lights in their hands. *Flashlight*, she told herself.

Then one of them looked towards her, and she moved quickly again. She heard them speaking, quickly... not angry anymore, no. Something else.

Fear?

She shivered again, and made a choice.

She approached them.

4

The Basement

They were loud. All three of them. Talking over each other, words spilling out much too fast for her to really take them in.

They'd brought her to... a house.

They'd had to be very quiet, and moved swiftly, rushing down stairs and into a dimly lit room.

The basement, they'd called it.

And now they were talking louder and louder, forgetting to be quiet at all.

She shivered. The chill she felt from her wet clothes was... not nice. She didn't like it.

And shivered again.

Then the three boys turned to look at her. She stared back at them, warily.

She was ready. But only if they did anything... bad. She would always be ready to run.

Then one of them led her to a chair, wide and soft and told her to sit down. He joined the other two boys and shared a look.

She dropped her eyes from them, taking a few shaky breaths, and she could still hear the thumping of her heartbeat in her ears.

"Is there a number we can call for your parents?" one of the boys asked.

"Where's your hair?" One of the other boys asked this. "Do you have cancer?"

"Did you run away?" asked third boy.

"Are you in some kind of trouble?" the first boy asked.

"Is that blood?" asked the third boy, reaching a hand out towards her.

She could feel herself shrinking away. She didn't like to be touched.

But then-

The first boy reached out a hand and slapped the other boy's hand away. They began to argue again, and after a moment the second boy joined in. Their words sounded strange and came too fast for her to follow.

Then the second boy stepped forward, slapping his hands together abruptly.

The sound it made was loud and jarring against the silence that followed, and she flinched.

The three boys looked at her then, and the second boy, the one who'd clapped his hands, shrugged.

"Not deaf," he said simply, looking to the other boys, as if this answered an important question.

"Alright, that's enough, all right?" said the first boy, taking charge again. "She's just scared – and cold."

He walked away from them then, searching for something. The other two continued to look at her curiously, and she flinched again as a crack of thunder rumbled through the house.

The boy came back a minute later, carrying a bundle of clothes.

"Here," he said, handing them to her, "these are clean. Okay?"

She took them with cold hands, feeling the soft, worn cloth, raising it softly to her cheek – *was it even real?* They were dry, and better than what she had now, or anything she'd ever really had before.

She dropped the jacket from her shoulders and stood, then reached down to remove the wet shirt.

They didn't like that.

Immediately, the boys backed away from her.

No. No no no no.

She wondered what she was doing wrong.

Then the first boy came towards her again.

"See over there?" he asked her, pointing to a door. "That's the bathroom."

She frowned. What did he mean?

"Privacy..." the boy went on, "Get it?"

She picked up the clothes from the chair and went over to the door that the boy had pointed to. He followed her over, standing by the door as she walked into the bathroom.

It was a small room.

She heard the boy move, and her head whipped around to see him pulling the door closed.

No.

She brought a swift hand up to stop him.

He bought his eyes to hers, and she watched him carefully.

"Oh, you don't want it closed?"

"No."

She saw surprise cross face, and then a small smile.

"Oh so you *can* speak? Okay, well how about we leave it like... this?" he asked as he pulled the door over, but left it open enough, just enough.

It would do.

5

The Fort

She felt warm.

For the first time... she was warm.

When she'd come out of the bathroom, the boy – the one who'd spoken first –brought her over to... *the fort*, he'd called it. It was made of odd tables and chairs, and there was a sheet draped over the top.

"You can sleep here," he'd said. "That's my fort. There are pillows and stuff there, and I'll get you a blanket. Sit down. I'll be right back."

So she sat. She watched as the other two boys pulled on their bags and got ready to leave. They were looking at her and talking in low voices.

They didn't trust her.

She didn't trust them either.

Then the first boy came back. He crouched down in front of her and handed over a yellow blanket.

"Here you go. This is my sleeping bag."

She took it from him, pulling it over her legs.

Warm.

She settled it properly onto the ground of the fort, smoothing the strange material with her palms. The other two boys walked up the stairs, and then they were gone.

"So, um," the boy spoke again, "I never asked your name."

She stilled a moment.

Should she tell him? Could she trust him?

She turned to look at him, considering him. He had nice eyes. And he had given her warm clothes – and somewhere to sleep.

Perhaps...

So she brought her fingers to the sleeve of the sweater, and pulled it up, exposing the number inked there.

011.

"Hey is that real?" he asked, reaching forward to look at it.

She pulled her arm back, cradling it close to her body, shooting the boy a wary glance.

"Sorry," said the boy, with a rueful smile, "I've just... never seen a kid with a tattoo before. What's it mean? Eleven?"

Slowly, she raised a hand to her chest, and pointed to herself.

"That's your name?"

She nodded.

"Eleven... Okay," he paused. "Um, well my name's Mike. Short for Michael..."

Mike.

Short for Michael.

"Maybe we can call you El," he went on. "Short for Eleven."

She nodded. She liked that.

El.

Short for Eleven.

"Um... well, okay," he nodded, then stood. "Night, El."

A beat of silence, as she looked up at him.

"Night, Mike."

Please let me know what you think.

I hope to do the rest of Season 1 from El's perspective. I love her character. Such a little badass.

I've already got Chapter 2 plotted out.

Thanks for reading :)

-Millie